



DO FEMALES ENGAGE IN LESS EXTRAMARITAL AFFAIRS THAN MALES IN INDIA?

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ABSTRACT

The present study tries to examine the possible determinants of extramarital affairs in Sikkim for men and women. Collecting data for 178 individuals from a hill state (Sikkim) in India this study found that higher religiousness, marriage satisfaction and education linked with a decreased likelihood of EMA significantly and probability of having EMA increases with higher income. Using Blinder-Oaxaca decomposition method this study further found that there is no significant difference between men and women in their response to an act of EMA, but rural people have higher chance of having an EMA than their urban counterparts in Sikkim.

KEYWORDS: India, Sikkim, Extramarital affairs, Logit, Blinder-Oaxaca.

INTRODUCTION:

Extramarital affairs are perhaps as old as marriage. While the phenomenon has been commonly observed in case of the developed world with its greater degree of affluence and economic independence of women, it has been slowly but surely increasing among married couples in India. The primary urges for extramarital affairs are biological in reason, as has been cited by several researchers in this area. On the one hand, incompatibility between married partners is one of the primary reasons for such affairs; genetic compatibility can also be a driving force in this direction, as pointed out by Elmslie and Tebaldi (2008). While men tend to favour women who are more suited to their own characteristics, women in turn try to concentrate on the attributes of the proposed partner. As has become common knowledge now, such women may prefer relatively stable partners for longevity of relationships, but they will indulge in temporary affairs with a view to bearing better offspring with higher quality offspring. As Elmslie and Tebaldi (2008) indicated, an important reason for this is the relative scarcity of quality genes.

Other commonly cited reasons for these affairs include the rise in income earning abilities of the salaried classes, greater participation of women in the workforce and increasing influence of 'western' lifestyles on the Indian populace. Particularly in case of women who are experiencing difficulties in their marital relationships, proximity to 'alternatives' at the place of work and other areas, which were previously not accessible to women, limited as they were to the home environment, is thought to be a 'facilitator' for this process.

There are some dangers involved in the act of an EMA. In the present days the chances of acquiring HIV/AIDS through casual sex encounters can also be an important consideration while looking into the issue of extramarital affairs (Oyeridan et al. 2010). A common reason for this is that people - especially men - can be very careless in such encounters, which may often be one night affairs. Secondly, these may involve prostitutes, who may not exercise caution, especially if they are poor and illiterate, which is often the case, particularly in developing and underdeveloped countries. In addition, in these countries, the wife may often have limited say in matters relating to the family in general and sex with her husband in particular. As a result, she has hardly any say in insisting on contraception, which means she herself may face the risk of acquiring HIV/AIDS, even if she is a homemaker who does not venture out of her house, and/or does not participate in sex outside marriage.

While the prevalence of extramarital affairs is commonly associated with the upper and middle classes in India, it is not that the phenomenon does not exist in case of economically less secure sections of society in India. Often the exposure of such affairs in case of comparatively impoverished sections, usually involving inter-caste or even inter-religious associations, is accompanied by violent reactions from the families or clans involved, with the death of one or both of the couple in question being a familiar occurrence.

In case of the north eastern parts of the country the occurrence of such affairs is a common phenomenon, though its acceptance by society in general is not clear. This region offers a unique perspective compared to the rest of the country since the women here play a more pro-active role with regard to the earning of livelihood. Thus compared to the rest of the country, where married women are dependent on their husbands for their upkeep, in Sikkim women are apparently economically more secure.

The significance of this study is that it is one of the unique studies of this type in the north eastern region of this country. While such literature may be rare at this moment, it is hoped that the present study could lead to more such research in this field in a region of India where social and behavioural norms are relatively relaxed compared to the rest of the country.

Recently more people especially in Sikkim are ready to be open about their affair than before, which makes our research easier. Many researchers studied the "sex difference" in the case of EMA. Evolutionary psychologists debated whether an innate, evolved sex difference exists between men and women in response to the infidelity. Using the National Health and Social Life Survey data in the USA, LaLasz and Weigel (2011) found that more men are engaged in acts of infidelity compared to their female counterparts. Lammers et al. (2011), found that financially independent and powerful women were more likely to engage in EMA. Controlling for the risky behavioural engagement, LaLasz and Weigel (2011) found that, there were no difference between men and women in their likelihood of being unfaithful.

This study try to examine the following hypothesis: Is there a significant difference between men and women in case of EMA in Sikkim?

EXTRAMARITAL RELATIONS AND THEIR FALLOUTS:

The primary motivation behind this study came from readings of the papers of Fair (1978) and Elmslie and Tebaldi (2008). Both papers provide a fairly comprehensive examination of the different influencing factors and their relationship with the occurrence of extramarital relationships, compared to other such works which have concentrated on specific aspects of the relationships or particular economic variables and/or models.

Fair's study was inspired by two studies in contemporary publications. As Fair (1978) pointed out in his paper, the basic unit of person's life has always been taken to be his or her family comprising primarily of his or her spouse and their children. As a result the individual's activities outside the family have received comparatively less attention. Added to this is the fact that an area like extramarital relationships is somewhat controversial, the relatively taboo nature of the topic meaning that few people will be forthcoming with their experiences, if any. This will be more so for relatively conservative societies.

In his work Fair has treated extramarital activities as a subset of leisure activities. His justification for carrying out the study was that keeping in view the frequency of extramarital affairs, it would be useful to examine whether economic analysis could be employed to predict their occurrence.

Fair utilised the Tobit estimator developed by Tobin (1958) for the analytical portion of his work.

The basic idea behind the development of the model was that people prefer variety in their lives. This is why leisure activities occupy an important part of people's lives. For the purpose of his study, Fair classifies these activities into two types, viz., - time spent in activities with the spouse, and the time spent in activities with the 'other person', whom he addresses as the paramour. Fair admits that his model is only one of several ways of looking at extramarital affairs. He goes on to mention a few other alternative methods for developing relevant models as a means of carrying out future research in this area. Elmslie and Tebaldi (2008) have themselves acknowledged Fair's work and have followed a similar

approach of carrying out an economic analysis of extramarital behaviour with particular emphasis on the differences between men and women in this regard. While accepting that biological factors play a role in this respect, the model stresses on the effects of rational choice and free will. A major aspect of the model is its consideration of costs, the rationale being that opportunity costs of affairs ultimately guide human behaviour.

Researchers suggest a variety of factors that determine the EMA and marital disruption. In the pioneering work of Becker et al. (1997) found that age at the marriage and divorce relationship may be nonlinear. Using National Survey of family Growth (Cycle 5) data, Lehrer (2008) also found that, "the relationship between age at marriage and marital instability is strongly negative up to late 20s, with a flattening of the curve thereafter". Fan and Liu (2004) have carried out the first empirical study on how the perceived changes of marital satisfaction affect marital stability using a unique data set obtained in Hong Kong. Among their findings, the change of marital satisfaction due to extramarital affairs clearly increases the probability of divorce, but it is not the only determinant of marital instability. In particular, the presence of dependent children in a family and good marital quality before the discovery of extramarital affairs would lower the probability of divorce. Buunk and Van Driel (1989) found that men are more inclined to have an EMA with increased marital dissatisfaction. According to Lammers et al. (2011) more financially independent and powerful women are more likely to be unfaithful to their partners. Similarly, women with higher economic independence (South, 2001; Hiedemann et al. 1998, Aghajanian, 1986) are also likely to engage in an EMA. Analysing a sample of 1439 individuals Atkins and Kessel (2008) observed that religiousness and educational qualification reduces the likelihood of having an affair. They concluded that the relationship between religious behaviour and infidelity is "powerful and complex". Buss and Shackelford (1997) found that: "one of the striking set of findings in this study are the consistent links between general marital dissatisfaction, dissatisfaction with marital sex, and lack of love and affection in the marriage, with anticipated infidelity. The findings are consistent for both sexes".

Hartnett and Wollman (1979) feel that it is relevant to look into the dynamics of affairs as well as how the individuals are perceived by others. Their results indicate that the perception regarding both husbands and wives was lower when either of them was in love with the 'third party'. Another factor affecting the perception of the wife and the 'third party' was the presence of children. South et al. (2001) have developed and tested a perspective on marital dissolution that gives primary emphasis to the volume of attractive spousal alternatives as a key determinant of the risk of divorce.

Li and Racine (2004) examine Fair's model of extramarital affairs and reveal that number of years of marriage is not a relevant predictor for the propensity to engage in extramarital affairs, while controlling for other factors. As per their admission, this goes against the prevailing wisdom gleaned from misspecified parametric models.

Whisman et al. (2007) have examined predictors of 12-month prevalence of sexual infidelity in a sample consisting of 2291 individuals and concluded that the association between marital dissatisfaction and infidelity was moderated by religiosity and wives' pregnancy.

Nath (2011) studied the influence of demographic features like gender, age, education, occupation, years married, number of children, satisfaction with married life and degree of religiousness on EMA.

The literature in the area of gender-difference in EMA is limited. Some researchers have found that men are more likely to be involved in EMA than women, which is broadly explained by evolutionary theory (Buss and Schmitt, 1993; Kenrick and Keefe, 1992). Many researchers argued that the gender differences exist because of structural differences. Traditionally, men are powerful to obtain resources and have had more exposure and opportunities than women. Given the same opportunities such as independent sources of power, wealth and economic independence and status, female infidelity should also increase and there should not be significance difference between men and women. (Buller, 2005; Wood and Eagly 2007). If power is one of the important determinants of EMA for men, same should be applicable for women.

From the preceding literature review it is apparent that there is a lot of scope for examining the prevalence of extramarital affairs in Sikkim in India. This study seeks to address the gap in the current literature in the following ways: firstly, i) so far this is the only study on the issue of EMA in India; ii) the data collected by the researchers is unique and has never been analysed before and iii) using Blinder-Oaxaca decomposition model this study analyses the differences in sexual infidelity between men and women.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY:

The conceptual framework used in this research in connection with the EMA has been taken from Ray Fair's 1978 paper. It is argued that individual extramarital affair outcomes are a function of personal, educational and social factors. As gender is to be used as the basic distinguishing factor in the analysis, each relationship is tested separately for men and women. A combined gender (persons) analysis is provided for comparison.

The primary econometric model used in this research is given by:

$$EMA_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Gender_i + \beta_2 Yearsmarried_i + \beta_3 Child_i + \beta_4 Religiousness_i + \beta_5 Education_i + \beta_6 Occupation_i + \beta_7 Marriagerate_i + \beta_8 Durban_i + e_i \text{-----}(1)$$

$$EMA_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Gender_i + \beta_2 Dmarriedone_i + \beta_3 Dmarriedtwo_i + \beta_4 Dmarriedfour_i + \beta_5 Child_i + \beta_6 Religiousness_i + \beta_7 Education_i + \beta_8 Occupation_i + \beta_9 Marriagerate_i + \beta_{10} Durban_i + e_i \text{-----}(2)$$

where EMA is a binary variable taking the value "1" if the person is involved in extramarital affairs. Descriptions of the other variables are given in table 1, e_i is the random error term that follows normal distribution with zero mean and constant variance. The main focus of this paper is to study if the outcome of EMA differs significantly between men and women. Firstly, equation (1) and (2) are estimated using Logit model for both men and women. The variable 'gender' is used in the combined equations only and tests the significance of gender as an explanatory factor.

To analyse the mean outcome differences in EMA between men and women this study utilised the Blinder-Oaxaca decomposition (Jann, 2008) analysis, which divides the differential into a part that is explained by differences in endowments (years of marriage, child, religiousness etc), a part that measures the contribution of differences in the coefficients (which is unexplained by endowments and, as such, becomes our measure of discrimination) and an interaction term which recognises that differences in endowments and coefficients can simultaneously exist. Usually, a major issue in the use of the Blinder-Oaxaca decomposition is the choice of non-discriminatory of the structure of the EMA. One can, for example, assume that the EMA structure for men is non-discriminatory and that women are disadvantaged (because they do not get the same exposer as men do). Our concern, however, is to assess if the outcome of EMA for men and women differ in Sikkim less problematic. Similar analysis using Blinder-Oaxaca decomposition model will also be used to show the differential effect for rural and urban region.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS:

Table 1 reports the abbreviated name and descriptions of the variables, mean and the standard deviation. For example the average married life for our sample is 11.48 and the standard deviation is 10.10 years. The summary statistics for the other variables are self-explanatory.

Table 1: Description of the variables and summary statistics

Variable name	Variable description	Mean	Std. Dev.
EMA	Involvement of the respondent in extramarital affair = 1 if yes, 0 otherwise	0.48	0.50
Gender	Male = 1, Female = 0	0.76	0.43
Yearsmarried	No of years being married	11.48	10.10
Dmarried1	If the respondent being married for less than three years = 1; 0 otherwise	0.21	0.41
Dmarried2	If the respondent being married between three to six years = 1; 0 otherwise	0.33	0.47
Dmarried3	If the respondent being married between seven to fifteen years = 1; 0 otherwise (default dummy)	0.15	0.35
Dmarried4	If the respondent being married over sixteen years = 1; 0 otherwise	0.32	0.47
Children	Number of Children in the Family	0.79	0.41
Religiousness	Self-rating of religious belief, ranging from 1 to 5; 1 = not at all religious and 5 = Highly Religious	3.39	1.00
Education	Level of education: 1 = year one; 2 = year two----10 = secondary/matric ; high school certificate = 12, 15 = Bachelor; 17 = postgraduate and 20 = PhD or equivalent	9.21	4.66
Occupation	Level of occupation ranging from 1 to 7; 1 = farm labourer/housewife; 2 = unskilled worker/machine operator; 3 = clerical/sales worker; 4 = technicians/semi-professionals; 5 = teachers/government officers; 6 = university educators/owner of medium business and 7 = higher executive or proprietor of large business	4.76	1.81
Marriagerating	Self-rating of marriage, ranging for 1 for extremely unhappy to 5 for extremely happy.	3.6	1.20
Durban	If the respondents is from urban region = 1; Otherwise 0	0.56	0.50

The estimated coefficients of the Logit model show the direction (sign) and

significance¹ of the relationship between the dependent and the independent/explanatory variables but fail to show the actual effect of such independent variables on EMA. Therefore, table 2 reports only the marginal effects² (dy/dx) of the independent variables at mean because a variable's marginal effect shows how much a change in the variable changes the probability of the focal outcome (Hoetker, 2007).

From the preceding analysis it is clear that gender is not significant. In other words, there is no significant effect of EMA between men and women. Years of marriage are negative and significant for the combined sample, the urban region and also for the female population. This implies that the greater the number of years of marriage the lower the chance of having extra marital affairs for these

three groups. For example, women are less likely to be involved in extramarital affairs as the marriage grows older. On the other hand, males generally tend to have a lower sense of commitment to a relationship. This is a fact that holds true across countries and cultures. This has often been attributed to the genetic makeup of males. In particular, in India, girls are brought up under the belief that they will ultimately have to go to a different household after marriage, and as such, should learn to be more accommodative towards one and all. This means that often in spite of knowing that their husbands are involved in illicit relationships, wives often keep quiet for a number of reasons including but not limited to 'the family honour', a sense of 'duty' as a wife, the welfare of children, etc. Sikkim is also no exception to the phenomenon of the silent suffering wife, as we discovered in course of our survey.

Table 2: Logit estimates of extramarital affairs

Explanatory variables	Marginal effects of the estimated coefficients									
	Whole sample		Rural		Urban		Male		Female	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Gender	0.016 (0.21)	-0.005 (-0.06)	0.105 (0.95)	0.084 (0.74)	-0.110 (-1.05)	-0.123 (-1.25)				
Yearsmarried	-0.007* (-1.92)		-0.005 (-0.80)		-0.008* (-1.79)		-0.005 (-1.20)		-0.026*** (-2.99)	
Dmarriedone		0.059 (0.47)		0.194 (0.85)		0.181 (1.21)		-0.053 (-0.36)		0.286 (1.18)
Dmarriedtwo		0.222** (2.45)		0.065 (0.43)		0.322*** (3.43)		0.220** (2.24)		0.619* (1.94)
Dmarriedfour		-0.038 (-0.42)		-0.105 (-0.64)		0.054 (0.53)		-0.046*** (-0.45)		-0.147 (-0.97)
Child	0.160* (1.84)	0.135 (1.25)	0.196 (1.61)	0.316 (1.61)	0.062 (0.53)	0.116 (0.98)	0.153 (1.48)	0.062 (0.48)	0.297** (1.97)	0.392* (1.77)
Religiousness	-0.136*** (-4.30)	-0.126*** (-3.93)	-0.085* (-1.84)	-0.089** (-1.96)	-0.141*** (-3.09)	-0.112** (-2.31)	-0.137*** (-3.79)	-0.117*** (-3.14)	-0.165*** (-2.78)	-0.157** (-2.45)
Education	-0.017** (-2.08)	-0.016** (-2.10)	-0.026*** (-2.58)	-0.026** (-2.55)	0.014 (1.05)	0.017 (1.31)	-0.005 (-0.56)	-0.004 (-0.47)	-0.059*** (-5.82)	-0.083*** (-4.10)
Occupation	0.048*** (2.60)	0.052*** (2.88)	0.058** (2.14)	0.053* (1.94)	0.027 (1.02)	0.035 (1.38)	0.026 (1.18)	0.031 (1.44)	0.087*** (2.78)	0.098*** (2.58)
Marriagerate	-0.128*** (-4.95)	-0.134*** (-5.37)	-0.081** (-2.18)	-0.076** (-2.04)	-0.252*** (-6.93)	-0.257*** (-7.78)	-0.151*** (-5.09)	-0.163*** (-5.85)	-0.044 (-0.78)	-0.087 (-1.26)
Durban	0.001 (0.12)	-0.012 (-0.14)					-0.045 (-0.49)	-0.075 (-0.83)	0.466*** (3.00)	0.488*** (2.76)
Observations	178	178	78	78	100	100	136	136	42	42
Pseudo	0.231	0.257	0.157	0.157	0.400	0.465	0.243	0.286	0.557	0.551
Goodness of fit test: Pearson	175.88 (0.304)	161.72 (0.339)	79.14 (0.189)	71.80 (0.292)	83.29 (0.705)	67.63 (0.836)	162.20* (0.019)	148.88* (0.021)	69.85*** (0.002)	48.85** (0.016)

Note: ***, ** and * indicates the significance at 1%, 5% and 10% level respectively. Figures within the brackets represents the t-statistics

It may be possible to have a nonlinear relationship between extra marital affairs and years of marriage³ and therefore we have decomposed this variable into four dummy variables (Dmarriedone, Dmarriedtwo, Dmarriedthree and Dmarriedfour). We have found that not only is the coefficient of Dmarriedtwo positive and significant for most of cases but the size of the coefficient is also larger compare to other variables. On the contrary Dmarriedfour is negative; it implies that in general people are satisfied with their married life (upto 3 years after married life) and after that they try to find some other avenue of love and engage in extramarital affairs. Elmslie and Tebaldi (2008) considered a second degree equation for age and found similar results for age.

A major factor leading to weakening of marital relationships has often been found to be the number of years spent in marriage. Sometimes being married to the same spouse for a substantial period of time tends to introduce a sense of boredom due to which individuals are attracted to external enticements that offer something new. However in case of the present work, we have obtained the opposite finding – the results suggest that in case of the urban couples, years of involvement in marriage is a significant variable, though in a positive way, i.e., the longer the marriage, the less is the chance of being involved in extramarital relationships. Cultural factors may be playing a role here. In the practical world, this variable is certainly significant in an urban context, but in the opposite or negative direction. In general, men may be attracted towards younger women as their wives grow old, as witnessed in our study.

The coefficient of occupation is significant for the combined data as well as the rural and female populations. As the value for the occupation increases the salary

of the profession also increases which in fact increases the chance of extramarital affairs and that makes sense. People may be more inclined to spend the additional income in the pursuit of such affairs.

A related aspect is that as more and more women join the workforce, the workplace which was once the exclusive domain of males is getting more diversified. This increases the opportunity for mingling with the opposite sex. This sometimes leads to the germination of extramarital relationships, especially in case of those who are involved in unhappy marriages.

The estimated marginal effect of education is at -0.017 for the whole sample, -0.058 for rural and -0.087 for females; and significant at least at 5% level for all specifications except for urban and male group. The marginal effect for the female counterpart is at -0.087, which implies that a one unit increase in the educational level for women will reduce the probability of EMA by 0.087. This suggests that the higher the educational level lower the chance of extramarital affairs. More educated people may try to have the affair(s) in a more sophisticated manner. Again those who are more family oriented may consider it to be against their culture, tradition and upbringing to indulge in such affairs and hence may refrain from it.

The marginal effect of the religiousness is negative and significant for all specifications. The size of the marginal effect is also larger compared to other explanatory variables. Therefore this variable is an important determinant of the occurrence of extramarital affairs. In other words, the higher the education level, the lower the chances of extramarital affairs. Our result is very similar to that of the

findings of Elmslie and Tebaldi (2008).

The bonds of religion are apparently being weakened by rampant consumerism and changing social mores. Naturally people are falling prey to a number of vices, extramarital affairs being no exception to this development.

An additional factor worth mentioning, and which was unearthed in the course of our study was sexual gratification, which was also a motivating factor for men involved in extramarital relationships. During our study men admitted to such viewpoints, describing it as a way of adding 'fun' to their lives. They were prepared to pay the 'other' women to gain such satisfaction. Interestingly, they did

not want to divorce their existing wives, nor were they thinking of marrying their paramours, ostensibly because they were otherwise satisfied with their wives. The paramours, in turn, are happy as long as they receive the money. They are not interested in complaining to the wives of the cheating women. On the other hand, the wives prefer to keep silent, possibly because their husbands continue to take care of them. This apparently happy triangle has made extramarital relationships a common part of the social fabric in Sikkim.

Of course the question of sex will be accompanied by the shadow of HIV/AIDS. The north eastern part of India, which is already well known for drug use, can obviously be vulnerable to the disease.

Table 3: Blinder-Oaxaca model for the difference between i) Rural-Urban and ii) Male and Female

	i) Rural vs Urban (coefficients)				ii) Male vs Female (coefficients)		
	Combined	Male	Female		Combined	Rural	Urban
Rural	0.615***	0.654***	0.522***	Male	0.493***	0.655***	0.383***
Urban	0.380***	0.383***	0.368***	Female	0.452***	0.522***	0.368***
Difference	0.235***	0.272***	0.154	Difference	0.040	0.133	0.015
Explained	0.217***	0.213***	0.101	Explained	0.019	0.016	0.010
Unexplained	0.018	0.059	0.053	Unexplained	0.021	0.117	0.005
Sample size	178	136	42		178	78	100

In this part of our research we would like to show the differences in the outcomes of extramarital affairs for different groups, viz. - (i) rural versus urban and ii) male versus female using Blinder-Oaxaca (Blinder 1973; Oaxaca 1973) decomposition methodology. Table 3, which reports the estimated results⁵, shows that significant differences exist in case of extramarital affairs between males and females and also for rural and urban populations. The decomposition output in table 3 column (2) reports the mean predictions on the basis of rural versus urban perspectives. In our sample the estimated coefficient for the rural people is 0.615 while for the urban residents it is 0.380 i.e., a difference of 0.235, which is significant. This implies that the people those who are living in rural areas are more likely to have extramarital affairs compared to their urban counterparts. It can also be seen that the explained part of the difference is 0.217. This means that 92.3% of the differences are accounted for by gender, years of married, child, religiousness, education, occupation (can be treated as a proxy of income) and marriagerate.

Our main focus of this study was to find out if the outcome of the EMA is significantly differing between men and women. In our sample data 76% of the men are reported having EMA which is much higher than that of women. Weinberg et al. (1997) and Cameron, (2002) have also found similar pattern. However, it is not wise to draw conclusion on the basis of descriptive statistics because, this may be misleading. To avoid the sampling problem this study used i) a gender dummy variable (Fair 1978); ii) run the regression separately for men and women and iii) used Blinder-Oaxaca decomposition model. The results from the Blinder-Oaxaca decomposition model found that the outcome of EMA does not differ significantly. It should also be noted that estimated coefficients (not reported) and the marginal effect for gender, is not significant for any specification (see table 2). Therefore, our study differs from Buunk and Van Driel (1989) who found that men are more inclined to have an EMA with increased marital dissatisfaction. However, our study agrees with Lammers et al. (2011). The reason is that more financially independent and powerful women are more likely to be unfaithful to their partners. While extramarital affairs have been conventionally associated more with males recent trends suggest that this could be changing as a greater percentage of women in India attain higher education and/or join a variety of occupations. Literate and economically (South, 2001; Hiedemann et al. 1998, Aghajanian, 1986) emancipated women sometimes take liberties by themselves being involved in extramarital relationships. On the other hand the stereotype of the silently suffering wife is also being broken as women are not afraid to take steps against errant husbands, even going to the extent of filing for divorce, something which was unthinkable earlier. Development of feminist movements, greater awareness of atrocities against women and stronger laws are all contributing to the latter phenomenon.

CONCLUSION:

Extramarital relationships have gradually become one of the facets of modern life. In some cultures, particularly in the west, it has even been accepted as a kind of lifestyle statement. As our survey revealed this is another of the elements of western lifestyle that people are following in India. Compared to the rest of the country the north east is more adaptive of this kind of culture, which may explain the liberal attitude of society here towards the extramarital phenomenon. However, only a comprehensive study on such relationships across the country can establish whether this phenomenon is more common in the north east.

From the preceding analysis and the consequent results it can be surmised that the main variables influencing extramarital behaviour are sex, lower degree of religiousness, engagement in occupations and lower self-rating of marriage, and

in a few cases, educational levels. The reasons are not difficult to find.

It is difficult and maybe even improper to set down policy initiatives for preventing people from being in extramarital relationships, since even though such relationships cannot be ethically justified and can have very damaging impacts on the individuals concerned, relationships are a very personal area where legal initiative cannot be supported unless they have criminal ramifications. One way of avoiding such complexities is to make people aware of the dangers posed by such relationships to family bonds, particularly to the development of children. Married couples could be offered encouragement for making their relationship stronger through films and other audio-visual media. The institution of marriage counselling, either formally through laws, or more informally through counselling services provided by NGOs or religious institutions, could help to repair damages in marriages which are facing the risk of breaking down.

The fact however remains that given the speed and increasing complexity of modern life, eliminating extramarital relationships can be a daunting prospect. We have already witnessed the breaking up of joint families into nuclear ones, increasing incidents of divorce and ill treatment of elders. Prevalence of extramarital affairs is just one more addition to this lengthening list. This is further catalysed by dominance of technology, the appearance of the 24x7 workplace and the resulting decrease in time that married couples can devote to one another and to their children, if any. This would suggest possible solutions in the form of understanding organisations that allow employees more time to spend with their families and also in pursuing their hobbies or interests, along with supportive families that allow married couples the space to develop and strengthen their relationship.

The original objective of this paper was to compare extramarital behaviour among males and females. There is obviously and expectedly a clear cut difference between how men and women view and approach this phenomenon. This difference originates from both genetic and sociological reasons. As mentioned at the outset, women who indulge in extramarital liaisons do so mainly for emotional reasons, while men are driven by short-term sexual motivations. Men want to spread their seed as far as possible, whereas women are interested in acquiring the best genes for their offspring. Social upbringing makes most women view EMRs from a negative viewpoint, while being more accommodating of their own husbands' transgressions; on the other hand, men take advantages of the liberties afforded by a paternalistic society to indulge in sexual dalliances. These and other reasons ensure that involvement in EMRs is more numerous and commonplace for men compared to women. With greater involvement of women in the workforce, particularly in white collar work, and the all pervasive growth of technology, this imbalance between men and women with regard to involvement in EMRs could well reduce, but any such change will take time, particularly in a country like India where norms and prejudices have a tendency to perpetuate over a substantial period of time.

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NOTES:

- I. See Hoetker (2007) for details.
- II. The original estimated coefficients will be available upon request.
- III. In fact we have done a separate regression using years married and the square of years married. The coefficients are opposite sign but not significant. So we have decomposed the variables with four dummy variables.
- IV. We used STATA software for the estimation using the command "Oaxaca"